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DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

D R A F T

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Over-All Effects of Air Strikes Against North  
Vietnam Through 30 September 1965 (S)

General:

1. (TS) During September, the sorties generated in support of operation ROLLING THUNDER rose eight per cent over last month's level. The air activity was highlighted by attacks on North Vietnam's remaining key line of communication with Communist China -- the Hanoi-Dong Dang rail line. Fifty-six missions, involving 884 sorties, were flown against 18 JCS-designated targets; 11 of these were struck for the first time and the balance were restrikes. Eight of the targets attacked were north of the 20th parallel, including four ammunition storage depots, two barracks and two bridges (one rail and one highway). The remaining targets attacked included seven barracks, two supply/ordnance depots and one POL storage area. The VNAF participated in two of these latter missions, attacking two barracks areas near Vinh Linh. The month's air strikes further reduced national capacities as follows: barracks by 2%, ammo depots by 12%, supply depots by 1%, and POL storage capacities by 1%. Sustained armed reconnaissance activity consisted of 58 missions flown against

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lines of communication and targets of opportunity. Since the initiation of air strikes against North Vietnam, 117 US and nine VNAF aircraft have been lost due to enemy action. During September, 23 US aircraft (14 USAF and nine US Navy) and two VNAF aircraft were lost to enemy ground fire.

DRV Military Reaction:

2. (TS) North Vietnam's military reaction to the air strikes ranged from an increase in the tempo of SA-2 firings to a

25X1

25X1

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The pattern of SA-2 firings extended from the Thanh Hoa area in the south to the Cao Nung area, northeast of Hanoi, near the Communist Chinese border. A drone and an F-105 were lost to missile fire. The precise source of these firings is not known, but at least one SA-2 firing element has been active in the Thanh Hoa area since 24 August. The heaviest concentration of SA-2 firings came from the Cao Nung area, where 13 unsuccessful SA-2 firings occurred on 20 September in reaction to an air strike which interdicted the Hanoi-Dong Dang rail line. On several occasions, MIGs were active in the vicinity of US aircraft, but no air engagements ensued.

The longer range DRV reaction to air strikes emphasized the displacement of men and materiel to less conspicuous areas and the exploitation of any stereotyped patterns of US air activity.

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Although there is no concrete evidence of North Vietnam's awareness of the timing and scope of each new ROLLING THUNDER operation, their actions suggest a basic understanding of our operating concepts. They position maximum AAA defenses around targets of obvious, and continued, interest to us. There is also evidence of their moving antiaircraft weapons into an area after the initial attack, in anticipation of restrikes. The recent pattern of missile firings suggests their deployment near frequently used US air routes over North Vietnam.

Construction programs continue in evidence at major North Vietnamese airfields. The runway at Hanoi's Gia Lam Airfield has been extended, and the runway at Haiphong's Kien An Airfield is being widened, lengthened and resurfaced to permit operations by higher performance aircraft. Airfield revetments are under construction at three other airfields, but the bombed airfields, Dong Hoi, Vinh, Na San, and Dien Bien Phu are still unserviceable with no rehabilitation efforts noted.

The North Vietnamese are striving to keep open that portion of Route 15 which crosses the border from North Vietnam via the Mu Gia Pass into central Laos, where it becomes Route 12. There is recent evidence of their employing ponton bridging equipment in this area, both for new construction projects and to alleviate congestion at ferry crossings in the vicinity of bombed bridges.

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Restoration actions along the interdicted Hanoi-Lao Cai rail line northwest of Hanoi continues, with emphasis on bridge repairs along a 40 mile stretch northwest of Yen Bai.

Effects on Military Targets:

3. (S/NFD) Air operations this month increased pressure on Hanoi by attacking the more sensitive lines of communication and by further reducing their supply base. These operations have not significantly reduced North Vietnamese capabilities to conduct current levels of defense operations. The PAVN capability to launch a major invasion of South Vietnam has, however, been substantially curtailed when compared to the period prior to initiation of air strikes. The capability of the armed forces of the DRV to perform their missions of defending the homeland, training their own forces and infiltration forces for SVN and Laos, and logistically supporting their own forces and the Communist forces of SVN and Laos at present levels of activity, while hampered, has not been diminished to an appreciable degree.

Statistics on destruction of barracks, supply depots and POL storage areas (Tab A) indicate that the air strikes made slight inroads on total capacity. However, attacks on bridges and ammunition depots, coupled with an armed reconnaissance program which ranged widely, had a more significant effect. The interdiction of the Hanoi-Dong Dang rail line, and the earlier interdiction of the Hanoi-Lao Cai rail line have, in effect, denied Communist China through rail service with Hanoi. In North Vietnam at present, there is through rail traffic only on the Hanoi-Haiphong and the Hanoi-Thai

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Nguyen rail lines. While air operations have limited North Vietnam's freedom of movement, particularly in their southern provinces, infiltration of materiel to the Viet Cong continues. The Viet Cong logistics requirement from foreign sources remains relatively small compared with North Vietnam's capability to support the Viet Cong. Communist forces in Laos, however, particularly North Vietnamese units, are more dependent on North Vietnamese support than are the Viet Cong. In this regard, indications of supply difficulties in the northeastern areas of Laos continue to be reported.

The North Vietnamese Navy's operating patterns have been modified during the past several months. After the heavy strikes of April and May, combat elements of the Southern Fleet commenced a withdrawal to the vicinity of Haiphong and there are indications that about half of their 18 gun boats are now, or have been, undergoing maintenance. Recent high altitude reconnaissance of northern North Vietnamese naval bases has detected only small numbers of ships. A strong possibility exists that a number of DRV naval ships have been shifted to ChiCom waters.

Effects on the DRV Economy:

4. (S/NFD) a. The economic losses caused by air strikes in North Vietnam are still small in relation to total economic activity because the targets attacked still are generally outside the major economic areas. However, there are now considerably more indications

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of localized strains upon the economy, most notably in food supply and distribution. The bombings of the railway lines leading from Hanoi to the northwest and northeast are probably having a greater adverse effect on the economy than any targets attacked to date. With the interdiction of three important land lines of communication, domestic production, distribution, and reconstruction are being curtailed and exports and imports reduced. Another serious effect is the diversion of scarce resources from productive uses to the repair of damaged facilities and development and use of alternate means of transportation. This diversion has almost certainly retarded, if not stopped, work on a number of high priority economic construction projects. The capabilities of North Vietnam's armed forces have not been affected significantly by attacks on economic facilities. Although the movement of personnel, equipment and supplies is hampered by damaged transportation facilities, the armed forces place little direct reliance on the North Vietnamese economy for materiel.

b. Direct economic damage is between 15 and 16 million dollars and measurable indirect economic losses amount to more than \$8 million -- mainly reductions in foreign trade and agricultural output. The direct economic losses that can be measured have fallen most heavily on the transport sector of the economy. The cost of permanent reconstruction of rail/highway bridges would be on the

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order of 7 to 8 million dollars and the replacement or repair of destroyed transport equipment would cost an additional \$3.3 million. Temporary measures to keep traffic moving would cost an additional \$850,000. Reconstruction of the damaged electric power plants would cost about 4.5 million dollars. Repair costs for the petroleum storage facilities are estimated at about 500 thousand dollars. Through September, there has been a decline in the value of exports of almost \$5 million. In addition there have been losses from lowered production. The industrial losses cannot be quantified, but it is estimated that the potential reduction in rice crops this year resulting from shortages of power for irrigation will amount to roughly \$3.5 million. The cost of reconstruction, replacement, and repair of damaged facilities if attempted, would represent over 7 per cent of total annual investment and about 15 per cent of annual investment in industry.

c. The official North Vietnam press has tacitly admitted failure to carry out simultaneously all the necessary defense, reconstruction and production tasks. Party leaders have called for a major reorganization of the Communist Party apparatus in order to strengthen the provincial and district committees of the Party. These officials have primary responsibility for directing defense mobilization and production in their respective regions. Thus problems in organization are compounding the chronic shortages of skilled manpower which have become even more apparent during the

period of the air strikes. Large numbers of workers have been sent south to repair the damage. Their effectiveness has been impaired, however, by severe local shortages of food and construction materials caused by poor distribution and problems in transportation. Some of the effects of the shortages of skilled manpower may be avoided, however, by the arrival of additional Soviet and Chinese technical personnel. North Vietnam is now receiving increasing numbers of technical advisers to assist in reconstruction as well as structural components and materials, not only from China, but from other Communist countries as well. The transfer of a considerable portion of North Vietnam's limited resources of skilled labor and construction materials to repair and reconstruct the bombed facilities constitutes an appreciable drain in amounts available for the planned investment program and has required a reordering of investment priorities. If orderly economic development is to be continued, there must be a more rapid increase in aid from other Communist countries than has been observed to date.

d. The single most significant air strike against transportation in North Vietnam was the bombing of a bridge on the Dong Dang-Hanoi railroad line on 20 September. This route is the principal means by which North Vietnam has received imports of military equipment and economic goods from China by land. The organization of alternative road and sea transportation to compensate

for the loss of through rail traffic will take some time. In the meantime, the North Vietnamese will resort to temporary expedients to try to keep military and high priority economic traffic moving past the interdicted bridge. Continued interdiction of the line will have serious consequences in maintaining production of the two blast furnaces at Thai Nguyen, North Vietnam's only iron and steel complex, which has been receiving about 500 tons of coking coal from China by rail each day.

e. There were no air strikes against electric power targets during the period under review. Previous damage to five power plants reduced the total generating capacity by 13.5 per cent, causing minor curtailment of mining and industrial operations and loss of power for an irrigation system. Destroyed petroleum storage facilities remain at 18.3 per cent of total capacity -- which was large in relation to normal consumption. Dislocations in telecommunications has necessitated the use of priorities and alternate means of communication, and the effectiveness of postal service has declined. The food problem in North Vietnam has been aggravated by the air strikes. Food rations in an area south of Hanoi reportedly have been cut, and food shortages are reported to be particularly serious in the southern provinces. The chief causes of the worsening food situation are transportation and organizational difficulties. The bombing attacks on the electric

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power network in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An Provinces have interrupted normal irrigation services which likely will cause a reduction in the fall rice harvests in these areas. The volume of seaborne exports continues to decline and the loss of foreign exchange earnings was intensified.

North Vietnamese Political and Public Reactions:

5. (S) During September, no basic change in Hanoi's attitude toward the war was evident as a result of the air strikes. Hanoi continues to assert its determination to press on with the war in South Vietnam despite the continuing attrition of the air war and the increase of US troops in the south. This determination was evident in regime propaganda which placed special emphasis on assertions that the US is not prepared to conduct a prolonged war in Vietnam, but that the Vietnamese insurgents are prepared to do so and have the necessary resources.

On the subject of negotiations, Hanoi was unusually vocal during this month. Coverage of this issue centered on a Foreign Ministry memorandum broadcast on 23 September. This and other statements offered no policy departure from the "four-point stand" of 8 April. Rather, by phrasing, emphasis and omission, these statements tended to convey the impression that Hanoi was endeavoring to clarify its position on settling the war and to avoid locking itself into an inflexible position on negotiations.

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There were no indications during the month that the Hanoi regime's attitude toward the war was being influenced to any greater extent than in the past by the reaction of the DRV populace to the air attacks. The morale of the populace seems to be standing up fairly well, although signs of deterioration in some quarters continued. For the first time in many weeks the regime did evidence some concern over the effect that the air strikes were having on the populace. A broadcast directed to the populace of one region of the country chided them for failing to comply with the planned civil defense measures when strikes occur. The broadcast implied that the local people had little regard for the Government's plans and took their own measures to protect themselves.

4 Enclosures  
Tabs A through D